

SATURDAY, NOV. 5, 1870.

Subject: The Ministration of Pain.

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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE MINISTRATION OF PAIN.

“For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” *Rom. 8:18*

The Hebrew was not, according to our modern interpretation of that term, of a philosophical nature. The Greek generated ideas in the intellect; and they pertained mostly to beauty and to the imagination. The Hebrew, deep in nature, gave forth his ideas from his heart. They were therefore more moods of fervent emotion. The expression of his philosophy was not the expression of a train of intellectual thought. It was, rather, some form of experience set forth. The Apostle Paul, more than any other one of the writers of the Bible, united these two elements—the logical, intellectual power of the Greek mind, and the profound, emotive nature of the Hebrew mind.

Therefore you shall find (and this is the peculiar difficulty in the interpretation of the Apostle Paul's writings) that while he maintains a certain exterior form of argument, or philosophical statement, it is, as it were, exploded here and there continually by the unbidden and tumultuous outpourings of his heart. And no man can interpret correctly who cannot bring himself into sympathy both with the inspiration which comes from deep inward moral life, and with philosophical forms and processes.

Now, the eighth Chapter of Romans, it seems to me, is the greatest feat of moral philosophy that has ever been performed in this world. It is deeper, more comprehensive, and therefore more difficult in the form in which it stands, than any other part of Scripture. It may be called an *epitome of Paul's philosophy of the universe*. Almost every moral question ever agitated finds some recognition here. Its very difficulties arise from the number and importance of the truths which pour into it; for, like the Amazon, it drains a continent; and every drop that falls upon the furthest mountain, or along the valleys, finds its way hither. And so, I might almost say that the Bible forms a water-shed on either side, and that it all runs into the eighth Chapter of Romans, for depth, and width, and momentum, and for the endlessness of the ocean into which it flows.

I have selected from this chapter Paul's doctrine of suffering as the subject of remark this morning. From the first verse to the seventeenth of this chapter, Paul illustrates the conflict that is going on between the faculties which represent man's physical condition, and the nobler faculties which have been developed above them. It is the great battle of the spirit against the flesh, which has been going on since the beginning of time. And the pointings of recent science, instead of sweeping anything away, are going to corroborate in an extraordinary manner that very line of truth and of argument which the Apostle instituted, from the first verse to the seventeenth—although he had not any fore sight of it in its scientific developments as we have in our day. There is a strife between that which a man has by virtue of his animal constitution—his animal appetites and passions—and that which he has by virtue of his higher nature, by which he becomes a son of God. These two things, associated—these two conditions, one working outwardly and downward, and the other inwardly and upward through the invisible; one taking cognizance of visible objects, and the other of interior truths—have been for ages in mighty conflict. The flesh has striven against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Each of them has been seeking to come into the ascendancy.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth verses, he sets forth the ultimate result of this conflict on the scale of the whole world, and all time.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God [that is, individuals are, and the race are.]”

It is not a bestial race because it has so much in common with beasts. It is not a physical and animal race because it has so many alliances with the animal condition, and has had so much experience and contact with it. There is yet, in this great, hard, coarse, animalized, sensuous, ignominious human family, a daring spirit. They are, notwithstanding their lower nature, sons of God. The spiritual element is in them.

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Have you never noticed how Beethoven *thinks* in his symphonies; how the grand movement, sweeping on as if it were the sound of winds and birds in some mighty forest, there will suddenly, as it were far away, remotely, come in one single, simple, wailing note, while everything is going on? And then before you know it, he has modulated the whole symphony, and it follows that one note, and conforms to it, and develops the new theme, opening up in another sphere with a majesty and grandeur incomparable. And so, here, that word *suffer* is the note that is struck in the course of argument. And now Paul turns and runs out after that, and opens it up, and unfolds it, in a most wonderful manner. He has been saying, “Here is the animal life, but

there is a spiritual one; and the spiritual life is working against it, and striving to get the uppermost. And the created world is a witness that we are the children of God. And there is the testimony of the spirit that we are Christ's if we suffer with him." Ah! how significant that word *suffer*. Then he says,

"For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

We are the children of God. Our future is incomparable glory. And the instrument by which we are going to be brought to it is suffering. That was the thought which lay in his mind.

Then he sketches the relation of this experience of suffering to the divine idea in creation, and brings out, first, that suffering inheres in the nature of that plan which God developes in the life of this globe, where he says,

"The earnest expectation of the creature [it would be better translated, the earnest expectation of *creation*] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

The whole world is aspiring to that unknown sonship, that spiritual divinity, in every man. The whole creation is pointing toward it in certain ways, and longing for it. For, "the creature," Paul says, "was made subject to vanity"—that is to say, to weakness, to aberration, to sin. Everything that comes short of the ideal creation was made subject to this, "not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope." This suffering, and collision, and attrition, and all the phenomena which fall out under it, are a part of God's design, the apostle declares. They are not accidents. They are not interpolations. They are not discords, thrown in without the musician's knowing it. They are not blots on the manuscript, that have to be written over, or under, or scratched out. They are a part of the organic design of God in the creation of the world. When, far back in the eternal ages, He made the globe, He did not mean to make it a round, golden, bright globe, full of ethereal and perfected spirits. He meant to make it just as He did make it—a globe that should begin with nothing, and unfold, and unfold, with mighty stripes, and with mighty sufferings, and with mighty victories ultimately, and with perfect glory and joy in the end. And thus, suffering creation "was made subject to vanity, not willingly," not of its own accord, not of its own volition, but by the fore-ordination of God. By the divine decree it was made just as it was made. So the apostle declares.

"Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

This world has not seen its history. You must not judge of what is to take place in the long run, by the opening of the battle which we

have but just seen—for the ages have only opened it. In the end there will be a triumphant consummation. So says the apostle.

“For we know [and here comes in a kind of sad, minor strain following that twenty-first verse of jubilation] that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.”

This is only a latent use of the thought which Christ expressed in the sixteenth chapter of John's Gospel, and the twenty-first verse :

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.”

The first clasp of the babe in her bosom pays her for every groan and for every anguish. *The whole creation groans and travails in pain.* It is bringing forth. But when it shall have brought forth, it will not be a man-child merely—it will be *the man-child Jesus Christ*. It is God manifest in man that shall be the ultimatum. We are born in a period which shows the labor-pain. It is the throes of coming spiritual birth that agitates the globe and the race of men. This is the apostolic thought, evidently.

He also shows that it will not end in confusion. It is not disorderly because it is dark. The pain-bearing world has a glorious future. The suffering of God's people will by and by glow in heaven with a light compared with which all we know of glory on earth will seem insignificant.

After the storm has brooded all day long, and hung low, so that the clouds shut out all forms, and there was but gray and haze, have you never seen the wind shift and roll away the clouds, and the clouds bank themselves up and sweep out, so that at last the sun, toward sunset, struck them at the proper angle, and all that had been so dark and gloomy through the day began to light itself up, and stood like a heavenly portal glowing wide, and the glories began to flash out on those banks that now had lifted themselves up into the very brightness of heaven? And yet it was the same thing that at one time made the darkness, and that at another time seemed to be the glory of heaven itself.

The sorrows and trials and mischiefs of this world are dark enough in the passing, and in the brooding; but the time is coming when the light of God's countenance shall be so let in upon them that they shall be marvels and magnitudes of glory and of beauty.

And then comes that anthem which it seems to me might well be chanted in every Christian church at least once on every Sabbath. After the Apostle has gone through, in his peculiar way, half feeling, half reasoning, much being sketched and hinted, and, indeed, leaving vast unexplored depths, then, as it were, when the mind has traveled over, and got on the other side of the question, he breaks out and says,

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

He has been speaking about the history of this world; about the strife between the good and the bad, between truth and falsehood, between the higher elements and the lower. He has been saying that this is a part of the constitution of things. He has been saying that the ages are waiting for the development of the meaning of it. He has been saying that the complete disclosure shall by and by come; and that then the glory revealed shall be such that all the sufferings which we have been called to endure shall not be worthy of mention in comparison with it. He has been saying that there shall be no forces, no fate, no intervention, nothing, that shall stand between God and the consummation of these things. He has been saying that God, having declared it, shall fulfill it. And then, when he has finished that long testimony and argument, he says,

"Who [with all this before our minds—for that is the force of it] shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that, neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything in creation, [for that is the meaning of the phrase *nor any other creature*,] shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I propose to translate some few of these thoughts into forms and language which will fit our experience, and into the expression of the philosophy of our time.

Pain is but an inflection of sensibility. Sensibility is the evidence of the existence of nerve; and nerve-life is the distinguishing difference between the vegetable and the animal. As you go down and nerve decreases, so its capacity, and so its quantity of existence, decreases. Or, taking the reverse, as you go up from the very lowest development of life, you will find that you come to a new development of that existence which we call *nerve*, but which is the ground and root of sensibility, whether of pleasure or of pain. Pleasure and pain are the two factors of sensation; and they grow first to consciousness; then to volition; then to character; and so to final ripeness.

Pain is not, then, a discord, nor an accident. It is a part of the original constitution of things. If you imagine a being, as the world has been made, that has no pain, you imagine a being that has no existence as a sentient or possibly intelligent creature. Why this is so; why God should have chosen to create the world as he has created it, no man can ask. The only true philosophical question is, How has God made the world? It is not philosophical to ask, *Why* did he make

it so? for there is the point where by searching no man can find out God. But Paul declares that this condition of things whereby pain came into the world, was not from the willingness of the creature—not from the volition of the man. This was instrumental; that is, it was concerned in it. But the power of susceptibility, which is, in other words, the organization of the nervous system—that brought it in. The less pain, the less life-capacity. The less pain-power, the less life-power.

If you go to the lower orders, you shall find that they suffer very little. But then they live very little. If you go down to the ox, the ox does not suffer as a man does. He has no anxiety, except the most transient fear, on occasion: he never meditates fear. The ox has no exquisite suffering. If he fails of food he suffers a little hunger; but his range of suffering is very small. And his range of enjoyment is very small, too. If you go below him, you will come to a plane where there is still less suffering, until you reach the point where life can be divided up, and where if you cut a worm to pieces, each section makes off with itself, and furnishes itself with new legs, and new feeders, and a new stomach, and everything that it needs, and goes on again with a separate existence just as well as if it had not been touched.

If you go down below that to the still lower forms—to the jelly-fish, and such like—they seem to be mere pulpy masses, almost without any sensibility or susceptibility of suffering. As you go down, pain grows less and less; and so does life-force, and so does capacity, showing that pain is not accidental—that it has something to do with that organization by which come growth, complexity, dignity, magnitude, and divinity. And we shall see, probably more clearly, what it is.

The progress of life upwards, then, is marked by capacity of suffering; that is, by susceptibility; by the number of faculties which begin to act in conjunction or coördination; by the variety of the relations to the outward world and to each other which so many faculties place us in.

Pain and suffering are, in the actual experience of this world, regulative, disciplinary, and formative. They are not accidental. They are not without a tendency. They tend to regulate and rule men. They tend to discipline and instruct men. They tend to mould and confirm men in higher manhood. And suffering and joy, working together, are God's two schoolmasters, as it were. Suffering is the man, and joy is the woman—the husband and the wife. One is schoolmaster in one way, and the other in a corresponding and coöperative way. They regulate, they discipline and they fashion men. These are the great factors which inhere in nature, and by which the scheme of God in the universe is being unfolded and carried on to its final consummation and triumph.

Now let us specify under this general statement.

1. *Bodily pain* is the lowest form of suffering. It is of the least direct moral value. Yet it is indispensable. Where men are seeking to extend their range of existence, but are ignorant, it must needs be, if pain be regulative and disciplinary and formative, that in the process of learning how to carry even the body, pain will be present as well as pleasure, and both the one and the other will take man in charge. Animals know but very little. They are not susceptible of education except in the very smallest degree. But men develop; and pain with them occupies a much larger space. It mingles far more with their experience. But as they develop in the first instance, in civilized nations, and indeed in childhood, so far as the individuals themselves are concerned, they are ignorant of the conditions of the laws which surround them. Pain begins its office-work from the very earliest period; and it is the concomitant of the tendency to enlarge one's being. Suffering is that which comes by the attempt to live more, larger, more variously, more gloriously; but as we do not know how to do it beforehand, we have to find our way; and finding our way, we strike against this law and that law, against this decree and that decree, some of which respond in music, some in discord, some in pleasure, and some in pain. But we gather from both sides; for we are learning, practicing, finding our way up gradually, through the ministration of suffering and pleasure.

Suffering is derived from the *lower forms of mind*. From strivings, anxious forethought, care, the trouble of discriminating acquaintances and professions and labors, that are incident to persons who are seeking to make their way complexly for themselves and for their households in a great world like this—from these things the mind suffers. It gets tired, which is suffering.

It suffers, also, by ignorance of how to use itself, as it were tangling its faculties together. It suffers, likewise, from ignorance of the future. It suffers also by the handling of a man's self in all the relations of secular life, since he has no intuitions and no instincts such as the lower animals have. Thus is brought upon men a great amount of suffering. It is the lowest form: nevertheless, it is a *form*.

Now, this suffering is a teacher. It is a monitor. It is a companion that, going along the way, is perpetually pointing out the good and the evil, the right and the wrong. Pleasure and pain are perpetual interpretations of the law of rectitude.

2. Then comes a larger section of suffering; viz., that which arises from *disappointment* of inordinate or irregular desires. Men are only larger children. As children cry for what the parents know they must not have, and suffer because they are not allowed to suffer still more; so

men, through their ignorance or immoderation of various kinds, are perpetually seeking for things which would be their destruction, or would lead to greater mischief than the penalties by which they are denied. There is pride of life; and men run out after the things that will gratify that pride, with an eagerness far beyond that with which they seek the things that will gratify their moral sense. Men are looking out in this life after things that they want, but that they do not need. Vanity, self-indulgence in pleasure, indolence, ease—these are things which are aimed at. In other words, men are ignorant as to how they shall build. They are determined to build the foundations of their life, and to seek their happiness, in ways which are contrary to the very end of that happiness, because contrary to the very end of their moral development and character. And this is the origin of disappointments. Two-thirds of all the disappointments of life are not sent by a special Providence. Men butt against them. They hunt them for themselves. They seek them out in their own folly. And when pride is denied, we marvel at the mystery. Pride would be emperor; it would be pope; it would be all things; it would be God in man, without the divine greatness and purity; it would be supreme in power, and insatiable in demand; but this is not according to the law of the universe. Pride, so long as there is a benevolent Providence, must not be allowed to govern; and there come disappointments. And men wonder and marvel as to what is the origin of so much suffering. It is very plain what the origin of so much suffering is. Suppose a man should take a gimlet-hole as large as his little finger, and insist on crowding his thumb into it? And suppose, as it excoriated his flesh, he should stand and say, "What is the reason that this hurts me so? It is a mystery to me that my thumb aches in the way it does?" And yet, a man takes his pride, and attempts to force it through life in such a way as to crowd it into places where it has no business to be, and out of all true relations; and then wonders why he, of all men, is singled out for so much pain and suffering!

3. So, also, our *affections grow inordinate*, and seek to clothe themselves with conditions that are not consistent with the relations which every one sustains to those about him, and to his circumstances. And no one can determine so well as God what are those relations, and what is the fulfilling of them. The perpetual attempt to use single faculties, and those not the highest, out of all proportion, and out of wise direction, and out of proper coördination, explains largely the troubles and the dissatisfactions of men in life. We do not need any prophet to interpret to us that the sufferings which they, I was going to say, "enjoy," are sufferings which are remedial, which are occasionally medicinal, and which are not to be regarded as evidence of malign fate, or of evil in

the world; but which are to be regarded as belonging to that constitution of things by which God does not mean to let men distort themselves, and stands saying to each faculty, "In your own proportion; in your own channel; in your own order." When men are not out of line, pain is not there; but when they are, pain is there. Pain is proof that a man is wrong, under such circumstances.

4. Man's *vanity* is profuse, protean, full of all illusions. "Regular, irregular, and defective," as the verbs used to be in my hapless days, is vanity, growing more and more voluminous from the beginning, and in every direction. And if there be an order in the universe, and in individual development, under which human vanity cannot be permitted to become supreme, sucking out the nutriment of every other part of the soul; and a man seeks through vanity that which he can get only through other faculties, and, failing to realize that which is sought, because he seeks it in wrong ways, he marvels that he suffers,—do you marvel that he does? Ought he not to suffer? Is it not a benefit to any man who seeks to destroy his nature, that a decree of God stands and says, "Thus far, and no farther," and with buffet shoves him off from his own harm? And is it not benevolence, as well?

5. There is another class of sufferings which perhaps are harder to bear, and upon which the same remarks will cast some light. I mean the sufferings of *bereavements and of affection*. We love; and we are placed in circumstances developing great tenacity and fruitfulness of love; as, for instance, the love of parents for their children. We are cautioned against idolatry—which is a wise caution. Nevertheless, in the order of Providence and of nature, a little child, knowing nothing, is to live, as it were, off from and out of his parents; and they are obliged, so to speak, to enwrap him. They throw themselves around about him in order that he may feed out of their wisdom, tenderness, and instruction and guidance. Nor is it possible for two natures to conform themselves to the necessities of an inferior nature in this way, and do it for one, two, and many years, and, when suddenly this object of their affection is taken away from them, not feel an ache and a suffering for which there are no words in language—and for which no words are needed, because ten thousand hearts interpret, from what they have felt, the meaning of this suffering. And it seems strange that this should be so. There are many points of publicity in it. There is no one place where questions fly so thick, and where they are so difficult to answer, as here. If it is said, "This child died by a violation of natural law, and if you had observed natural law the child would have lived," the answer immediately is, "Then why did I not have natural law revealed to me? I

did the best I could. I rose early and sat up late. What sort of paternal love is it which could leave me in ignorance of that on which the life of my child depended? Across the way is a child that is poor and sickly and abused; and if it grows up, it will probably grow up to mischief, and live in misery all its life long. My child was healthy, it was well organized, it had hereditary tendencies of good; and I watched over it, and spent my whole honest endeavor to do well by it. And yet it was taken."

You cannot answer such questions. If you descend to human philosophy in this matter, all that you can say, is, that we are living in in this world for another, and that transplantation often takes place by the ministration of natural law, just as much as by God's right hand. It takes place according to a decree and a purpose which have not been revealed, and of which we know nothing now, though we shall understand it hereafter. No man can tell why his companion should be taken so suddenly, when there was every reason why she should remain. No man can tell why a person who is useful and apparently indispensable in the community, as a Christian, should be transplanted prematurely—that is, before the time. No one can tell why a child that is promising and virtuous, and in whom centre the hopes of the parent, should be taken before it has grown up. There is in human philosophy no answer to these questions that can satisfy the heart. The only reply that can be made to them, is, that the suffering is momentary; that the branch that is broken here will have its full growth there; that the consummation is only delayed; that children whose life is cut short in this world will have a new life under better auspices in the world to come; that what we lose on this side of the grave we shall have again when we reach the other side. There comes in a larger sense of life. There comes in a thought of expansion and opening.

There is many and many a man who never knew that there were more than twenty-five thousand miles in the universe until love sent him a mourning pilgrim seeking after the absent one. Then he learned that there was an infinity. For, when a soul stricken through and through, goes mourning, and saying, "Where is it? where is it?" and the sun says, "Not in me," and night says, "Not in me," and the grave mutely says, "Not in me," and God says, "Here," and the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come,"—oh! then the heart learns circumnavigation and largeness, and has restored to it in the long run, in the augmented sense of love, and in the power of augmented moral being, more than has been taken from it. Absence is for a day, but knowledge is for eternity.

"No chastening," says the apostle, "for the present seemeth to be

joyous, but grievous." God is not like foolish parents who take the spoon of noxious medicine, and put it the lips of the child, and say, lying, "Take it, my dear; it is sweet and good." God is like an honest parent, who says to the child, "It is very bitter, my dear; but you must take it; for it will make you feel better by-and-by." God says,

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby [that is, who are disciplined by it]."

So it is of bereavements, and of all such sufferings.

6. Then there is a suffering that is still higher—for we have already gone very high. There is a form of suffering which arises from the conflict of good and evil in ourselves, or the harmonization of a man's mind or soul by giving the control of it to his higher nature. This is what is called *self-government*. It is also called *self-denial*, which is, doing better things when it would be more agreeable to us to do worse things. When a man would merely germinate, and he arouses himself to be a thinker, that is self-denial. In other words, it is giving power to the intellect, instead of giving power to the flesh. When it would be more pleasant for a man to follow his fancy, and he is put upon following his moral sense, that is self-denial. And what is it but giving the control of the man's life to his conscience, instead of to his self-love? When a man would enjoy his own pleasure by sitting at home in the quiet covert of his household, and he goes out to seek and to save those who are lost, to rescue, and teach, and bear the troubles of those who are wayward and ignorant and tried, that is self-denial. And what is that but teaching a man to act from the better part of his nature, rather than from his selfish instincts? You practice self-denial only when you act from a higher faculty though you are tempted to act from a lower one. When you act from a spiritual feeling, though you are tempted to act from a mere animal one; when, if you are tempted to act from the baser elements of your being, there is something in you which says, "Act as a man having a love-breeding nature;" when you rise up into your higher faculties, and act in them, then you are practicing self-denial.

But here comes in the solution of one of the mysteries of this life; viz.: that pain and glorious joy are quite reconcilable. There is not a man here, I hope, who does not know what it is to suffer and yet feel happier because he suffers. No man ever does a thing that requires particular exertion and makes him smart in the doing, and yet that is right, that he does not have the testimony of his reason and conscience that it was the thing to do, and is not happier for having done it. Many a man, under such circumstances, is able to

say, "While I suffered pain down where my lower nature is, up where my higher nature is, I was gloriously glad." In the Bible you will find, all the way through, representations of men who rejoiced in infirmity; who were glad for suffering; who were happy because they were miserable; but the happiness and gladness and rejoicing must always be with the condition that if there are two kinds of faculties, one higher and one lower, the lower one suffers because the upper one has gained a victory over it. The upper one will be chanting its victory all the time, and the meanings of the lower one will scarcely be heard. If selfishness is wounded you will smart; but benevolence will be glad enough; and the gladness will more than make up for the smarting. If you are tempted by pride, and pride fights, and you overthrow it, the wound of pride will smart, and pride will cry out with pain; but conscience will fill all the realm above with a nobler and a better song of victory.

Thus, all suffering of the lower feelings, because they have been at fight with the higher, and have been whipped by them, will bring out the joy and the music of the higher. And there is no such transport as that which a man feels who suffers because he is on the side of God, on the side of a principle, and on the side of a great benevolence.

So it is that martyrs and heroes who have been witnesses for God, and have suffered for his cause, in all ages of the world, have been men who were able to rejoice with a glory of exquisite felicity which never was vouchsafed to self-indulgent men. For our joys increase as our faculties go up, and our sufferings increase as our beings augment. True suffering is the labor-pain of joy.

7. The highest suffering is that which men experience when they identify themselves with God's cause in this world, where the battle of their own deliverance is mainly waged; where the battle of their own lower life is mainly carried on; where the harmonization of their own faculties is to be effected by God's grace and training; where they have put themselves, as it were, out and over into the great sphere of human activity, and are living for other people and other interests than their own; and where by reason of these right and soul-satisfying courses, they feel that they are really the Lord's.

This is what is meant when it is said,

"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

He who makes Christ's cause in this world his own, goes up with it, or goes down with it, in joy or in sorrow, has the highest form of suffering. And it is a suffering which like the wings of a mighty angel bears one over the little that remains, and brings him near the very throne of God itself.

In application, I remark, first, that the great realm of sorrow and suffering in this world is not a lawless realm. There is nothing so dismal as for one to feel that he is born in life into a great whirl of light and darkness where there are accidents, contingencies, unregulated forces—perhaps fate, and perhaps demoniac influences; where things are loose and rampant. As at night storms howl in the sky, and torment the sea, and run riot every whither, without a master, so men seem to think it is in this world, and that blood, and groans, and sighs, and bereavements, and every form of mischief fill the world full, and that there is no God; or that, if there is, He hides Himself, and does not govern the world. But stop! There is not a drop of the water in the midnight storm of the sea which seems to be given over to misrule, that is not controlled by law, and does not act accordingly. And the wild caprice of night on the sea is as much under law as the formation of the crystal, or the growth of the fruit, or the development of any other influences upon the land. It is ordered of God; and though, to our look, the history of the human race, and the history of the world, has been one great unregulated whirl of manifold suffering without direction, and almost without profit, yet, after all, I think we may join Paul in his magnificent chant, and say,

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”

This world is not abandoned, and it is not lawless; and suffering does not run riot as it pleases. Suffering is God's appointed minister, and is working in the sphere where He appoints it, and is doing His will; and by and by, when it has cleared off, it will be about suffering just as it is in the fictile factories where, when they paint vases with beautiful flowers and running vines, they are smeared with black, and put into the furnace, and remain black, and are black when they come out, until they are brushed, and the black disappears, and naught but these beautiful flowers and vines remain. Behind the groans, and behind the trouble, and behind the anguish of men in this world, God has been writing; and in the light of the eternal world figures will come out, results will be seen of which we have no conception here. It does not yet appear what we shall be. We are sons of God. We are much oppressed by suffering. We come through tears. There have been many in every age of the world who have been saved by the washing of their garments in blood. A strange bath! A strange white, that comes from crimson! But so it is. God took your companion; He humbled your pride; He scattered your property; He smote down your ambition; He made you a cripple, and rolled you out of the pale of industry, and left you dependent, and you are like a callow bird fed by some winged messenger.

God has, in all this vast sphere of various hindrances, and various attritions, and various outlying sufferings, an order. And it is no less God's because it is executed by natural law. For natural laws are God's fingers; natural law is the reaching out of God's right hand; natural law is the will of God throughout the universe.

I remark secondly, suffering must be used in this world. That is to say, it is not enough for us to comfort ourselves if we are afflicted. Many and many a one may be afflicted and not know what to do with his blessing. Many may be afflicted and yet not understand the affliction, and not work it out. As when one is sleeping in a room that is filled with smoke, and is half suffocated, and is, by a friend that is rushing to save himself, smitten heavily,—if he does not understand the warning he sleeps on and is consumed; as when, under such circumstances, the man not taking the hint does not rouse up and save himself, but perishes: so suffering often comes to little, because it is not interpreted; because men do not know the meaning of it; because they do not understand the direction that comes to them; because they do not study it, and endeavor to profit by it.

The first thought every man has in respect to pain or suffering, is as to the shortest cut to get rid of it. Your life is ore, and God puts you into the furnace, and kindles the fire; and when the draught begins to spread the heat, your first thought is of the quickest way to get the fire out, but not of the best way to get the metal out and leave the dross. Your only desire is to get away from the fire. Very few there are who have the grace, when God afflicts them, to say, "O! my soul, sit thou down as a disciple of Christ," and to say, "O Lord, what wilt thou? What shall it do to me? What secret is now to be disclosed? What better way is to be walked? What new strength is to be developed? What higher hope is to be awakened? What disinterested love is to be called into action? What hath this suffering brought to me?"

Suffering is as God's letter. Open it and read it. Many of you will find that you are titled, or that there is an inheritance laid up for you. But suffering needs to be studied, needs to be pondered, needs to be helped. For otherwise it may be as a blind or dumb messenger, unable to show you anything, or to lead you anywhere. How much suffering there is that is squandered in this life! How much suffering there is that seems to come from nowhere, and to go nowhere! And in the midst of all our sufferings in this life, while we maintain this general faith that it is a minister of God for our education, cautionary, disciplinary, formative; while we are carrying with us, as a kind of shield, this blessed thought, there comes in also the other thought—and the

two are nearly joined together—that the day of suffering is a short day, and that the day of remuneration is an everlasting day.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

If I may stand at last before God, with all that which belonged to the material globe purged away; with all those forces, gigantic and intense, that allied me to the animal life below subdued and converted into a higher spiritual force; if I may stand there competent to understand things which were hidden from me here, with all the noblest instincts and intuitions of my nature purified and exalted, so that I shall be able to look God in the face and call him Father, and see him as he is—in that hour of coronation and of mighty triumph, what matter will it be if I have gained it through some tears, and many sorrows, and much suffering? The sufferings which we are going through, if they are not aimless, are full of promise to us.

Woe be to him then, that suffers and grows harder. Woe be to them who suffer and grow selfish. Woe be to them who suffer and sink down, and down, and down. Suffer as the vine does. The cutting off of the branch by the pruner's knife is not lost strength. The vine says, “If I may not grow in that direction, I will grow in some other direction.” And so it pours new blood into the cluster; and more sugar goes to each grape. And God prunes those that he loves, that they may bring forth more and better fruit.

Is God dealing with you? Do not do as Paul did, even. Do not pray thrice that the suffering may be removed. Is God dealing with you and laying his cross upon you? Submit. Do not ask to have the pain taken away. Say, “Lord teach me how to use my suffering for thy glory. Teach me patience. Teach me faith. Teach me how to commingle joy with sorrow. Teach me how to see what I never should have seen but for these trials. Bring me nearer home. Train me in manhood. Make me more inwardly than I have been; and I care not for the outward experience.”

Full blessed are they that are called, and that have this sign—*Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

If you do not suffer at all, in the shape of care or disappointment or aspiration, or in any of the forms of affliction which are incident to the divine economy in this world, God says that you are not sons. If there is no strife, if there is no aspiration, if there is no breaking away from the lower forms in which you are clasped and held, then there is no birth-pain, and therefore there is no birth. But if you suffer, and are submissive and are instructed of God, suffering is sanctified to you. And then you are children of God. Then you are sons of

God. Though it does not appear how great the glory of that estate is, yet we know that we are the sons of God, and that when he shall appear we shall be like him, and see him as he is, and dwell with him forever and forever.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near thee with ever-increasing joy and hope, our Father, since thou hast made thy love manifest to us through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We are not borne against fear, and in the face of storms, full of doubt, full of disaster, where so many have been whelmed and wrecked. For we have a sure word of prophecy and testimony. We are able to say *I know*. Our souls are better witnesses that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of them that diligently seek thee, than any reasoning can be. We have felt thy presence. It is by the power of thine heart that ours have been buoyed up and carried mightily in the hour of our depression and weakness. How much we need thee! Still we walk in the strength let down upon us from above as if it were our own strength. We control the earth with all its manifold and hidden forces around about us as if this was our power. Thus we are living by the inflections of thy will which are the laws of this globe, and assuming to ourselves the skill and the knowledge which is all borrowed from thee. For in thee we live and move and have our being. And thus united with thee, how can we be harmed? How can anything befall those who put their trust in God? If thou art for us, who can be against us? Even trouble brings fruit and peace, and sorrows bring down joy.

We rejoice, O Lord! that thou art such an one; and that this great wearisome and long and lonely travelling world is not forgotten; and that the few lines of light which break upon it here and there, as through storm-clouds the sun sometimes breaks, are not all the light that is reserved for it. We rejoice that this great burdened mankind that so long have afflicted themselves and been afflicted, have a pitying God; and that thou art carrying them in thine arms, and that thou art looking forward to the day of consummation; and that even as the seasons bring forth little things that spring up and grow and ripen until they wax strong; so thou art strengthening the world, and thou art causing it to ripen more and more unto thy purposes.

And thou shalt bring forth in the world victory when tears shall cease to fall, and sorrows shall be forgotten, and men for songs shall forget groans and sighs. In that bright day thou shalt vindicate the administration of love. And while thou wilt make it manifest, full of truth and full of justice, it shall be fuller of mercy and overflow; and all the universal realm shall know that thou art a God omnipotent in love, and that thou hast caused the whole creation, as a tree of life, to shake down its blossoms and its blessed fruits. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly; for our faith is like to fail. The darkness is so great, the multitude of those that know not God is so large, and wickedness is so desperate, the suffering and the sighing from above and from beneath are so pitiful, that the whole creation groans together in pain. And dost thou not hear it? Are we only to hear and to know, and dost thou forget, sitting in the palaces of thy love and looking forth? Thou hast given us testimony of thy remembrance in thy Son; and having given him, thou wilt give all things that are needful. And time cannot mistake, nor go wrong, nor the world be wrecked. Whatever is dark (and there is much darkness brooding that will not rise), and whatever is strange and mysterious (and life is full of mystery to us, unknow-

ing and untaught), all is light before thee, that seest the end from the beginning. Love cannot go wrong. And when thou shalt have consummated all things and completed thy work, we shall behold it, and with all thy ransomed hosts shall pronounce it good. And in the faith of thee (not in our knowledge of thee), in the faith of God's love (not in our knowledge of the way in which love is working), we stand and will endure to the end.

And now, we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt vouchsafe help to every one in thy presence according to his special need. Some are in joy, and some are in sorrow. Some are in despondency and doubt, and some are in the utter confidence and expectation of hope. We pray that thou wilt draw near to all those in the sunlight and to all those in the shadow, alike. Grant unto them, this day, that portion of divine influence which they need. We pray that thou wilt grant that those who are in prosperity may know how to consecrate, of their own good will, their prosperity to God who loves them. And we pray that those who are walking in sorrow and in adversity may find the grace of God and the strength of God in them, and never leaving them nor forsaking them. And may none account the burden too heavy which God gives them the strength to bear. May none be unwilling to take his cross and bear it. Blessed be thy name that thou didst bow, that thou didst bend, that thou didst desire the trouble to be removed, and didst pray for it, but didst, by the blessed fortitude and endurance of love, drink the cup, and wouldst not suffer it to pass, since it was the will of God that thou shouldst drink it. And may we, more feeble and failing and fearing than thou wert, and with less discipline than thine, be able to bear the things that are not taken off at our cry. And if the thorn be piercing and painful, and we beseech thee thrice, grant, at least, that thy grace may be sufficient.

O Lord, may we suffer on, if suffering be our appointed lot. If we are to be disappointed, and our way is to be blocked up, it is the way of the Lord. Let him do what seemeth to him good. May we be able evermore to have this confidence, that God is our friend; and that life itself, with all its experiences, though we may not see it now, is our friend; and that we are ripening and preparing for the ministration of suffering as well as for joy,—for that rest which remaineth for the people of God. May we be brave. May we be enduring and patient unto the end. May we know how to outwork sorrow and trouble and care. May we know how to rejoice in the midst of suffering and infirmity. May we count it all joy when we fall into divers trials. May we be so elated with hope from above, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we shall not be cast down as other men are, but shall walk in the light. And may we know how to extract joy from suffering. So, we beseech of thee that we may be taught of God. And we pray that thou wilt, out of our sorrows and sufferings have it given to us to comfort those who are in like affliction. May we know how to go about doing good, and fulfill the law of our God in our example. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon any that are in thy presence to-day looking wistful, and yet feeling that they deserve no thought of God. They that are conscious of their sinfulness, and are oppressed with the conviction of their ill-desert; they that do not feel even that they have strength to avoid sin nor to turn away from it; that they have no Saviour whom they dare approach, and who, yet, need one above all others, and in whom there is a conflict between despair and the love of that which is evil. Lord Jesus, are not these thine own? Is it not the work of thy grace to succor just such? Wilt thou not appear for those that cannot help themselves? Thou that dost break open the prison door; thou that dost go out after the lost to find them and to bring them back; thou that dost not wait for prodigals to come close to thee and speak their whole speech, but dost burst out with thy love, full of overflowing joy and forgiveness upon them, hast thou not here many that thou wilt rescue by

thy grace and by thy power, for the honor and the glory of thine own name?

We pray for those who do not pray. We pray for the children of parents long since gone home, who have forgotten parental example, and have wandered from evil to evil.

Peradventure many have come up hither this morning, not knowing what brought them here. Is there not one wanderer in our midst this morning to whom thou art speaking already, and whose conscience is condemning him, but who is, after so long a time turning and going back toward his Father's house? We pray that many wanderers may be reclaimed. May there be many of those whose hearts have been hardened, that to-day begin to experience a divine contrition. And we pray that thou wilt grant that we may know how to discern such, and how to succor them. And may every heart that to-day is conscious of Christ's grace, of his tenderness and forgiving mercy, and of his long-suffering, have some lesson, some message, some service for those that are bestead, for those that are hindered, for those that need succor. We pray that thy work may abound; that the truth may become a living power; that we may hear men beginning to rejoice who before have not known thee. And may this whole sanctuary be filled with the presence of our God, and with his soul-filling power.

Bless all thy Churches to-day. May thy servants that are appointed to preach the Gospel be more and more filled with God's power. If any of them are sick or in weakness or despondency, give them the light of thy countenance. And may they in the joy of the truth of thy salvation be able to go on in their way to the end, enduring patiently. And we pray that thou wilt unite thy people more and more. May we think more of the things in which we agree, and less of the things in which we differ. And we pray that thy Churches, united together in the love of God, and in patience with each other, and in the common strife of good will, and of doing good, may illumine all this land. May all the nations of the earth receive the tidings of thy Gospel. And may Jesus Christ become known, and his dear name be spoken in every language under heaven. May those who to-day, everywhere over the earth, are seeking to make the light shine in the darkness of heathendom be remembered of God; and may their hearts be comforted, and their hands strengthened.

We pray, our Father, that thou wilt speedily bring to an end the great war that shakes the earth. We pray that thou wilt grant that peace may bring with it justice, and that it may be such a peace that all the common people shall be fructified by it. We pray that dynasties that live by selfishness and by oppression may find their power waning, and that He whose right it is, shall come and reign. We beseech of thee that thou wilt give light and knowledge, and truth, and religion to the people, that they may find in Christ their birthright of liberty, and be able to sustain it, and not be corrupted by it. Oh! make haste. Is there not blood enough that flows to the horses' bridles? Are there not groans enough? Is there not misery enough? Lord, look out and rebuke the slaying and the slayer, and the destroying and the destruction. O Lord God! come, and let thy wings as the wings of a dove be outspread, and beneath the shadow of thy wings may the nations find rest.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

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